

# ToughTimes

EMAIL | TOUGHTIMESTABLOID@GMAIL.COM

Vol. 6 No. 2/ March-April, 2017



(Photo supplied by Maple Magic at Bradley Museum)

## Heading for the Sugar Bush

There's nothing more Canadian than maple syrup, and you'd like to think that every kid in Canada knows something about it.

Come March Break, (which is March 11 to 19 this year if you include the days when kids would not be in school anyway) maple syrup drips its sticky way onto pancakes and fingers, and small people absorb this most Canadian of products, drop by gooey drop. But not all of them.

It costs cash to learn about maple syruping. Even Peel District School Board charges \$5 for adults and \$4 for kids 12 and under who go to the Jack Smythe Field Centre near Terra Cotta during March Break, to watch the tapping of the trees, the dripping of the syrup, and see how the syrup is heated on wood fires. Pancakes for lunch is an additional cost item.

When schools are not on March Break, class visits can be arranged, with each school making its own arrangements to pay for a bus to the Sugar Bush.

Other organizations offer

maple syruping events.

Maple Magic kicks off at Bradley Museum, 1620 Orr Road, Mississauga, for one week only from Saturday, March 11 through to Sunday March 19. Activities from noon to 4 p.m. include learning how to tap a tree.

Cost is \$6.24 for children, \$7.80 for adults, and \$19.50 for a family.

Other places have other opportunities:

Credit Valley Conservation Authority has maple syrup activities on the go at Terra Cotta and Island Lake from Saturday, March 4, 2017 to Sunday, April 2, 9.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Check days and times for March Break and other dates may be weekends only.

Cost is \$5.75 - \$8.85 per day; children four and under are free.

And pancake breakfast is served all day at extra cost.

For festival details, schedule of events and tickets, visit [MapleSyrupFest.com](http://MapleSyrupFest.com)

Shop around for more syruping events. Maybe some of them are free.

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**Friday, June 9, 2017**  
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## PEEL POVERTY ACTION GROUP

Peel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) is open to every individual and organization in Peel Region that cares about what poverty does to people. It provides a safe place where people who are cash-poor and those who try to help them are encouraged to speak out – and *Tough Times* is part of that safe place.

The Group's mandate is to advocate for people in need and to educate the public about poverty issues. Membership is free. PPAG meets at 9:30 a.m. the second Thursday of every month (except July and August) alternately in Mississauga at the Newcomer Centre of Peel, 165 Dundas St. W., at Confederation Parkway; in Brampton at the John Howard Society, 134 Main St. N., just south of Church St.

### Meetings for 2017

**Brampton:** March 9, May 11, September 14, November 9;  
**Mississauga:** Feb. 9, April 13, June 8, October 12, December, date to be decided.

[www.ppag.wordpress.com](http://www.ppag.wordpress.com)

## Homeless: The Video

*Spaces and Places: Uncovering Homelessness in the Region of Peel* is a 15-minute video in which homeless people describe their experiences. A team from PPAG, including a once-homeless person, will show the video to a group on request. There is no charge. To book a showing contact [ppagactiongroup@gmail.com](mailto:ppagactiongroup@gmail.com). Allow about 45 minutes for the video and discussion.

The video was made by a team from York University, in cooperation with the Social Planning Council of Peel, financed by a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

You can buy *Spaces and Places* on a memory stick for \$50. Email [ppagactiongroup@gmail.com](mailto:ppagactiongroup@gmail.com) or phone 905 826-5041.

### TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

## Is a guaranteed basic income coming our way?

**P**eel Poverty Action Group and Peel Region Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee (PPRSC) jointly organized two public meetings to discuss Ontario's Basic Income Pilot Project – a government investigation of how to test the idea of handing out money to cash-poor people.

An early evening meeting was held in January, at a Peel Region office in Mississauga, another during lunch hour at Knights Table, a soup kitchen in Brampton, where diners and others voiced their thoughts.

PPRSC submitted detailed reports on what members of the public said at the meetings.

PPAG pursued some of the participants' ideas in later discussions, most taking place at Knights Table, and sent them off to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, which will publish a report this Spring. Here's what PPAG said.

### These are among the thoughts discussed:

Is the Basic Income Pilot Project a delay tactic, which will take so long to design and test that the realities of poverty will not be dealt with?

Its rules are not helpful: The age range of 18-64 is exclusive — some under 18s need help, including single mothers and young males who are homeless; The requirement for 12-months residence excludes homeless people who are the poorest of all; Groups for the Pilot Project need not be assembled only by geography (although the advantages of keeping contact, having offices for staff, are understood);

Suggestions for groups not determined solely by neighbourhood:

- people just released from jail, armed with a bus ticket, the phone number of a shelter, and not much else;
- homeless people;
- single mothers of various ages (possibly based in Peel, HQ at Knights Table);
- people providing care for elderly relatives with Alzheimer's or other afflictions — stories of daughters quitting jobs, then the welfare rules insisting they must exhaust their savings and RRSPs, sell their car, not invest in RESPs for their own children. PPAG is prepared to set up a group of Struggling Caregivers in Peel, to

further this issue;

- people with similar mental health issues, where supports could be provided along with cash, and improvements or failures measured;
- a racialized group, mastering a new language, learning a different way of life — where are the problems, where are the successes?

Generally, our participants were not interested in the design of the Basic Income Pilot. They need money now, not in some distant unpredictable future.

### How much money?

The labour movement is promoting \$15 an hour, which at 35 hours a week for a year would be \$27,300 or \$2,100 a month; the current OW (Ontario Works) rate is \$8,472 a year for a single person, or \$706 a month. In Peel, rents are high — at least \$350 a month for a single room, shared bathroom, no cooking facilities; you can't live on OW. And the people who have no other income need more money.

When you don't have enough to eat and you sleep in the woods, discussion of where more money comes from, how it will be distributed, how an allowance sits with the Low Income Cutoff, is entirely academic. You need money now, before the cold snap.

If you are sleeping in the woods, or in your car, you don't pay rent, so you don't get a rent allowance (\$376 a month gone from a single person's monthly cheque).

### Health

Dental care, vision care, prescription drugs, and other health shortcomings should be paid through OHIP for all ages and incomes.

### Education

Schooling should be free at all levels, and for all ages, from childcare to PhD. TVO has a motto "Never stop learning." It's a good idea. Perhaps its time has come.

Many of these suggestions, such as education, are far in the future.

Others are not. Health ideas, a more generous handling of rent for the homeless, an immediate increase in funds to provide acceptable shelter for the homeless, establishing support for family caregivers, these are feasible now.

## ToughTimes

**Tough Times is published six times a year**

**Next issue: May-June, 2017**  
**Deadline for ads and editorial: Saturday, April 1, 2017**

All deadlines are the first day of the preceding month:  
July-August deadline: June 1;  
Sept.-Oct. deadline: August 1;  
Nov.-Dec. deadline: October 1  
Jan.-Feb 2018 deadline: December 1.

**Phone 905 826-5041**

Volunteer writers, reporters, artists, cartoonists, photographers, are welcome at *Tough Times*.

### Please email letters to:

[toughtimestabloid@gmail.com](mailto:toughtimestabloid@gmail.com)

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## Advertising Rates

Tough Times distributes 10,000 copies, throughout Peel Region.

Target audience is people experiencing homelessness, using food banks and soup kitchens, people who are struggling, plus faith groups, social service agencies, trades unions, business people, and the general public.

### To advertise in Tough Times:

[toughtimestabloid@gmail.com](mailto:toughtimestabloid@gmail.com)

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Mail address: 4 - 287 Glidden Road  
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*Advertising rates: (colour included)*

**Business card: \$90**

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**3/4 page: \$600**

**Full page: \$755**

*A full page is approximately 10 inches wide by 12 inches deep = 120 square inches. E&OE*

## NEEDED: MORE WORK, BETTER WAGES, MORE HOMES

# Affordable housing is Job No. 1

BY COUN. CAROLYN PARRISH



Coun. Carolyn Parrish

**A**lmost every week, my office receives a call from someone struggling to afford a home for themselves or their family. Whether it's a single parent working two jobs to rent a small apartment, seniors who own their home but can't afford the property taxes and utilities, or a family with two working parents trying to scrounge a down-payment, only to see prices skyrocket out of their reach while they save what they can — Mississauga residents are struggling to keep a roof over their heads.

Nearly a third of Mississaugans are spending more than 30% of their income on accommodation. Peel's affordable housing stock is dangerously low. And with the population of Mississauga expected to grow to 878,400 people by 2041, up from 742,700 in 2011, now is the time to get moving on real strategies to provide residents with affordable housing options.

With construction of the Hurontario LRT (Light Rail Transit) planned to start next year, we're about to see an incredible amount of development along the Hurontario corridor. We need to do what we can before construction begins to ensure that affordable housing is at the forefront of our planning and development for the LRT corridor.

I strongly believe that Canadian families should not be putting more than one-third of their income towards housing. The fact that so many pay over one-third of their income, and often much more, is something that needs to be addressed by all levels of government.

It will take many tools to fix this problem -- job creation and a further increase in the minimum wage from senior levels of government, plus increasing the stock of affordable housing which is under municipal jurisdiction.

Since being elected to council in 2014, I've asked

for many avenues to be investigated --requiring new developments to dedicate a percentage of units as affordable, reducing restrictions on legalizing second units, opening up city-owned land for affordable housing, working with non-profits to create affordable homes, and subsidizing developers to make affordable units work with their bottom lines.

The Region of Peel is looking at changes to the centralized waiting list for public housing to reduce wait times and put families in homes. It is also considering a loan program to encourage home-owners to build basement apartments. I want to leave no stone unturned when it comes to finding a way to increase affordable housing stock.

## The Region of Peel is looking at changes to the centralized waiting list for public housing to reduce wait times and put families in homes.

Prior to the 1970s, developers were given tax advantages to build rental apartment buildings. When those incentives were removed, purpose-built rentals were abandoned by developers because of rent controls and higher property taxes, in favour of condos. Condos have become an unregulated, underground layer of rental units — as much as 25% of rental units in Mississauga are condos. A balanced housing market has a rental vacancy rate of 3% - Mississauga sits at 1.6%. Developers need some financial incentive to build rental properties again.

Another valuable source of affordable housing is second units or basement apartments. They give tenants more affordable options, while providing homeowners with a source of income to pay their mortgages. Recently, Mississauga has reduced the costly regulations and licenses needed to legalize basement apartments and the Region of Peel is designing a for-

givable loan system for homeowners to finish basement apartments and keep rents low.

In Ward 5, we've put our money where our mouth is — selling Habitat for Humanity a townhouse for \$2, which had fallen to the City for unpaid taxes. A family will be moved into it, off the wait list, this year. The City also donated an abandoned fire hall on Victory Crescent (\$650,000 land value) to Habitat and granted a minor variance to build four semi-detached units in which rents will be calculated at 30% of the family income. Those homes will be retained by Habitat — affordable in perpetuity. Habitat also receives grants from the Region (often via the Ontario government) to build affordable housing. We're also working with them on a two-acre property for affordable seniors' units in Ward 5. Rent will be based on 30% of the seniors' incomes, no matter what that amount is.

Also in Ward 5, new developments have been limited because of restrictions put in place around the airport. I have negotiated with the Greater Toronto Airport Authority (GTAA), which has agreed to relax some of their objections to infill housing by seeking sound-abatement modifications to windows and insulation. This could have a huge impact on available land for development in Mississauga. As Councillor, I will stickhandle an Official Plan Review and rezoning at the city and regional levels. It'll be hard work, but definitely worth the effort if it helps families get into homes.

We have the tools, but it will take all levels of government working together to make affordable housing in Peel a reality. I will do everything I can — and encourage others to do the same — to give Peel families safe, clean and comfortable homes.

*Carolyn Parrish is Councillor for Ward 5 which includes Malton. She was a Member of Parliament from 1993 to 2006, which included two years working closely with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Other tasks involved NATO, studying Palestinian refugees, monitoring elections in Palestine, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

## NEED FOOD?

غذا درکار ہے؟  
 ਭੋਜਨ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤ?  
 需要食物吗?  
 Cần thực phẩm?  
 هل تحتاج إلى الطعام?  
 ¿Necesita comida?



## Don't Go Hungry

If you don't have enough money for food and live in Mississauga, you can go to a neighbourhood food bank.

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Find your food bank at  
[www.themississaugafoodbank.org](http://www.themississaugafoodbank.org)  
 or phone 905.270.5589.





## TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

## Ontario childcare is the most costly in Canada



Rosemary Keenan

*The article below is a letter to the Consultation on Early Years and Child Care Strategy from Brampton resident Rosemary Keenan, sent on behalf of Peel Poverty Action Group. Ontario's Ministry of Education will publish notes on the consultation next winter, as it develops the Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework and Expansion Strategy.*

## BY ROSEMARY KEENAN

**T**he cost of living in 2017 is such that for most families both parents must work to make ends meet. The high cost of childcare limits parents' ability to save and get ahead financially. Single parents face an even greater struggle. Childcare should be government-subsidized.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care points out that Ontario's childcare fees are the highest in Canada:

"An annual study of Canadian child care fees from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) shows that, for the third year in a row, Ontario has the highest child care fees in the country – pointing to an affordability crisis for parents.

"The highest fees in the country are in Toronto and eight of the most expensive cities are here in Ontario – with Kitchener, Vaughan, Markham, Ottawa, Mississauga, London and Brampton among the most expensive. In Toronto the average fees for infants are \$1,649 a month, toddlers \$1,375 a month,

and preschoolers \$1,150 a month."

[http://www.childcareontario.org/annual\\_fee\\_study\\_2016](http://www.childcareontario.org/annual_fee_study_2016)

Childcare should be government-subsidized so that parents pay no more than \$20 per day. Subsidized childcare is an excellent poverty-reduction strategy. Subsidized childcare in Quebec allows parents to find good jobs, earn a decent wage, and to afford the things they need. At a salary of \$50,545 or less, a Quebec parent pays \$8.25 per day for childcare. With a salary of \$75,820 you pay \$13.15 per day. If your salary is \$158,820, your childcare fee is \$20.70 per day. It's easy to see how this system is a winwin for all concerned. When parents are paid a decent salary, that generates the taxes needed to support public services such as child care. That decent salary also gives parents buying power. When families are able to purchase what they need, the local economy thrives.

[http://www.budget.finances.gouv.qc.ca/budget/outils/garde\\_en.asp](http://www.budget.finances.gouv.qc.ca/budget/outils/garde_en.asp)

There are a variety of great ways to provide top quality child care, but many more daycare spaces are needed. We need to keep searching for opportunities to establish safe, accessible, affordable daycare spaces in our communities.

Employers should be encouraged to provide workplace childcare. A childcare centre for 0 – 4 year-olds should be in a safe, accessible, home-like setting with age-appropriate furniture, play spaces and equipment. A school setting is inadequate for early years care. However, a childcare centre attached to the local

elementary school allows families with pre-school and school-age children to bring their children to adjacent facilities; a shared entrance can connect the two facilities.

Childcare can be provided in a private home, in a faith-based facility, in a community centre, or linked with a college where ECE programs are offered. What about establishing childcare centres adjacent to seniors' homes, so old folk can enjoy the little ones?

Staff in childcare centres should be trained early childhood educators (ECE) with a ratio of adults to children as specified in the Day Nurseries Act.

For children up to 18 months, three adults are required for every 10 children.

For 18 - 30 months of age the ratio is one adult for every five children, with 15 being the maximum group size. Children aged 30 months to five years old are required to have one adult per eight children with no group larger than 16. For special needs children the ratios of adults to children are higher. A good quality daycare provides a nurturing, child-centred experience with a wealth of opportunities for play-based learning, and recognition and support for diverse cultures and needs.

It's challenging, and can be stressful, transporting your child to and from daycare every day, no matter the weather. The childcare experience should be designed to be as happy and stress-free as possible, for parents and for children.

*Rosemary Keenan is a retired school principal who ran for MP in Brampton Centre in the 2015 federal election. She is a New Democrat.*

## Hepatitis C

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# Is 2017 the year for housing action in Peel?

BY MICHELLE BILEK

**H**ousing is considered to be affordable when a household spends less than 30% of its pre-tax income on adequate shelter. Households that spend more than 30% of their income on shelter are deemed to be in Need of Core Affordable Housing. Those who spend 50% or more on shelter are in Severe Housing Need.

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reported in 2010 that more than one in four Canadian households live in core housing need, and one in 10 are in severe housing need.

In addition to the affordability standard of 30%, the CMHC has also developed standards for the state of repair and size of dwelling for the number in the family.

The terms affordable housing and social housing are often confused. Social housing is subsidized by the government, and is also affordable housing, as is housing provided by the private, public, and not-for-profit sector, including rentals, ownership, co-operative ownership, temporary and permanent housing. Affordable housing includes everything from temporary emergency shelters through transitional housing, supportive housing, subsidized housing, market rental housing, and market home ownership.

Safe and affordable housing is not just a necessity; it is also a human right guaranteed under Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which reads:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services...”

Housing enables people to build healthy and productive lives and create stable communities. Unfortunately in Canada, cancellation of social housing by the Mulroney Conservatives in 1993 has limited affordable housing, exacerbated in Ontario when the Mike Harris Tories cancelled 17,000 units of co-op and non-profit housing just days after being elected in 1995. Downloading social services to the municipalities in the early 2000s further affected the building and maintenance of affordable housing.



Michelle Bilek with Charlie Angus who is in the running to become leader of Canada's New Democratic Party. (Tough Times photo)

To this day, Canada remains the only country in the industrialized world without a national housing strategy. But don't despair. In November last year, the federal government published What We Heard: Shaping Canada's National Housing Strategy, a report on nationwide consultations, and a Strategy is promised for “early 2017.”

According to the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, “Between 1985 and 1989, the federal government helped fund almost 6000 units of affordable housing in Ontario per year. If our federal government had continued funding affordable housing at this rate, we would have some additional 115,000 affordable housing units in Ontario.

In Peel, The transfer of responsibilities for Affordable Housing to our regional government happened in two stages. First, creation of Peel Housing Corporation, which includes the municipal non-profit housing provider, Peel Living. The second stage was the full transfer of responsibilities to the Region of Peel. This includes administration of social housing co-operatives, community non-profits, federal housing projects, and the Peel Living properties. Also, the administration and management of all waiting lists, rent-gated-to-income applicants, and rent supplement programs became a Peel Region responsibility.

As a social housing service manager, the Region has a significant impact on the way social housing in Peel operates.

The demand for affordable housing is increasing, with waits up to 12 years, and fewer than 7% of people on the waiting list placed in subsidized housing each year.

Households in crisis, from evictions, unsafe buildings, individuals with physical and mental problems, are a priority for housing, so others on the waiting list, such as working, and single people, have very little hope in being placed in subsidized housing in a reasonable time.

Peel Region is investing in new properties and programs. But private landlords hesitate to participate in rent supplement programs, while few developers build rental properties or provide subsidized units in new builds. Meanwhile, the current housing stock is aging, with increasing maintenance costs.

Peel's Housing and Homelessness Plan, “A Community Strategy” 2014-2024 outlines some “strategic and supportive actions”. But many of these actions and “community ideas” read like a brainstorming session, not a plan with time frame and probable costs.

Is this why we have so many documents, committees and strategic

plans? How much more consulting and PLANS do we need? Plans don't help a woman who was living in a Peel Living building in complete disrepair or another trying to avoid eviction from her Mississauga apartment, or the thousands of individuals or families on the waiting list for years.

Action may be the key to 2017. Being a local resident, long time advocate and activist for affordable housing and homelessness, I have seen some progress in Peel. We now have mayors and councillors taking affordable housing seriously, who are willing to take innovative and progressive steps.

We can increase the supply of housing by: reviewing, amending, and utilizing legislative measures, including bylaws; improve the use and supply of regional buildings and properties; fast track development and construction permits for affordable housing projects; use development charges, taxing, grants, and other incentives to encourage landlords and property developers; make secondary units more attractive by providing tax incentives and alternative development standards; maintain existing housing stock through clean technology, renovations for accessibility.

We need to ensure that development remains a mix of subsidized and market rent homes, accessible to transportation, shopping, community centres, and schools.

Another PLAN, another document, another presentation to council, and another committee won't suffice. Legislative policy changes and action -- and quickly, is essential. Bring on 2017.

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The swimming pool at a new ErinoakKids Centre in Brampton will be accessible to youngsters with disabilities. (Photo supplied)

## ErinoakKids to open new treatment centres for children with disabilities

BY LEA SALAMEH

Later this year, or early in 2018, ErinoakKids, the largest children's treatment centre in Ontario, will unveil three new facilities in Peel and Halton Regions to meet the growing demand for services for kids with disabilities and special needs.

"Through our partnerships and outstanding staff, ErinoakKids makes a profound difference in the lives of thousands of children and their families each year," said ErinoakKids President and CEO Bridget Fewtrell. "With our much-needed Redevelopment Project, our vision is to create purpose-built, nurturing spaces sowe can serve even more children and youth, better and faster."

The new sites, one each in Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville, will replace ErinoakKids' existing 11 locations which are outgrown and outdated, and bring therapy, medical and support services under one roof. Among the services: speech language therapy, infant hearing services, physiotherapy, autism service and much more.

"The kids and families we are honored to serve will now be able to access a complete range of treatments at our new sites," said Board Chair James Sutherland. "This development represents the culmination of years of effort by ErinoakKids leadership and local MPPs, in co-operation and collaboration with various levels of government."

At approximately 122,000 sq. ft., the Brampton/Caledon site will be ErinoakKids' largest centre, serving about 6,400 children and youth. Located at the intersection of McVean Drive and Castlemore Road, the building is on an eight-acre parcel of land surrounded by a forested area, offering opportunities for outdoor treatment sessions and activities. Brampton's site will house Ontario's largest respite centre for children

who are medically fragile/technology dependent, have complex care requirements or autism. A range of services from day to overnight stays, and for the first time, the opportunity for 24/7 service. Specially-trained staff, nurses and program assistants will care for children, providing a period of caregiving relief for parents.

ErinoakKids' Mississauga site, at 1230 Central Parkway West just south of Burnhamthorpe Road, is on six acres, adjacent to residential and commercial properties, just steps away from public transit including Erindale GO station, and less than a kilometre from Riverwood Conservancy. This location will serve about 4,000 clients and will include fully accessible playgrounds for various therapies, an adapted fitness facility, two gyms for physiotherapy, group therapy and recreation therapy, serenity gardens.

The cost of design and construction for the project is \$163 million, provided by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The Ministry is also supporting land acquisition, project planning and overall project management.

ErinoakKids is raising \$20 million for critical programs and therapy equipment as part of its In My Dreams fundraising campaign.

To learn more about ErinoakKids Redevelopment Project, visit [Erinoakkids.ca](http://Erinoakkids.ca)

ErinoakKids is Ontario's largest children's treatment centre, serving more than 15,000 children and youth annually with physical and developmental disabilities, communication disorders, autism, blindness/low vision and hearing loss.

*Léa Salameh is a student in Sheridan College's Public Relations and Corporate Communications post-grad program and a communications intern at ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development.*



Chris Hatch, executive director of The Mississauga Food Bank, with produce



Farm in a warehouse



## Growing your own food – right there in the warehouse

### AQUAGROW FARMS PLANTS AND HARVESTS PRODUCE FOR MISSISSAUGA FOOD BANK

BY EMILY WILES

Everyone wants to feed their families the healthiest food possible, but buying nutritional foods can be expensive and difficult on a limited budget.

The Mississauga Food Bank, which distributes food to several food banks in Mississauga as well as supplying hungry people direct, finds that demand for fresh food is increasing.

So they've got creative to meet this growing demand -- they built an indoor aquaponics farm to provide fresh food year-round.

AquaGrow Farms will produce about 600 servings of fish and 11,000 servings of fresh greens this year.

growing bed, the roots of the plants act as a filter to clean the water.

Once the water has been cleaned, it is pumped back into the fish tank. From here, the cycle starts all over again.

Like most aquaponic farms, AquaGrow Farms raises tilapia. This breed of fish is strong, can adapt to a variety of environments, and tastes great. The fish stock comes from an aquaculture farm in London, Ontario, as two-inch 'fingerlings'.

AquaGrow Farms is currently raising both silver/grey and black tilapia. (Aside from their colour, there are no major differences). The fish are fed a high-quality diet for about six months to grow them large and strong. When they reach full size, the fish are harvested, processed, packaged, frozen and distributed to food banks throughout The Mississauga Food Bank network.

All the veggies that AquaGrow Farms produces is grown from seeds, which reduces the chances of introducing pests or disease into the system. The seeds are planted in a sponge-like fibre called 'rockwool', made of melted rock, a substance is that absorbs water and can be composted when no longer needed.

To date, AquaGrow Farms has grown three different types of lettuce: romaine and two types of buttercrunch. Lettuce is one of the few types of greens where the entire plant can be harvested, so there is no waste.

The current growing cycle is to harvest fresh produce weekly and distribute it immediately to client food banks.

The Mississauga Food Bank plans to experiment by growing other leafy greens including spinach, bok choy which is a Chinese lettuce, and kale. It may also be possible to grow tomatoes and strawberries.

Want to learn more? AquaGrow Farms and The Mississauga Food Bank host interactive, educational tours on the third Wednesday of every month at 6 p.m. There are also opportunities to volunteer as a Farm Assistant. Phone 905-270-5589 x231

The Mississauga Food Bank provides food for over 198,000 meals each month. Nearly half of all the food it distributes is fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy products. If you or someone you know needs food, go to <https://www.themississaugafoodbank.org/getfood/>

*Emily Wiles is Marketing and Online Giving Coordinator for The Mississauga Food Bank*



## TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

# You can't exit poverty on OW or ODSP

BY EDNA TOTH



Edna Toth

**P**eel Poverty Action Group (PPAG) told Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa (who is also the MPP for Mississauga South) that human beings can't live on current welfare allowances.

Attending an invitation-only meeting at Mississauga's Living Arts Centre, this is what PPAG told Sousa, Minister for Seniors Dipika Damerla, business people, social service workers and others:

Peel Poverty Action Group is an organization of cash-poor people, those who try to serve them, and other supporters. It tries to present the views of people who are struggling, to win a better deal for them.

Our major concern at this time is that allowances from Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support, in fact most welfare allowances, are impossible to live on. Allowances for rent should be immediately increased.

Shelters are inadequate and many people in distress won't use them, complaining of violence, theft, and other problems. This is not to take away from the dedicated service provided by shelter operators, but to draw attention to the problems that arise basically from inadequate funding for shelters and for individuals.

Peel Poverty Action Group is not funded by any level of government. We talk to people who are cash-poor.

They are in many cases homeless, not dressed for a Canadian winter, eating at soup kitchens – and please note there is no soup kitchen in Mississauga – they are suffering.

Studies are being undertaken by municipal governments and organizations with paid staff. Peel Poverty Action Group does not back up its assertions with The Figures. We meet people every day who may not survive should this winter provide a cold snap.

We urge better allowances for those on welfare in its various guises. And soon. Before the temperature drops.

*Edna Toth is editor of Tough Times*

## Care for Caregivers

PPAG also sent Minister Sousa a letter:

Dear Minister Sousa,

PPAG asks that people caring for sick relatives be recompensed for their work. We are particularly concerned for the welfare of people who enable relatives with ailments such as Alzheimer's to remain in their own homes as long as possible, rather than assign the elderly to nursing homes, often at public expense.

We know of daughters (and there may be sons too, similarly motivated) who have quit their jobs to provide essential care to afflicted relatives. But it appears that when these caregivers seek assistance through OW or other welfare systems, rules kick in refusing help until they have exhausted their savings and RRSPs, sold any car they own, and may not invest in RESPs for their own children. They must be close to destitute before help is available.

Yet these caregivers are reducing the financial demands on the Ministry of Health (in the top three in the size of its call on the provincial budget) to provide nursing and residential care to elderly people, who in many cases would be happier and at least as well cared for by their own relatives in their own homes.

Peel Poverty Action Group asks that the Minister of Finance encourage the appropriate ministries to include in their 2017 budget requests an item for recompense to caregivers of elderly relatives.



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*Promoting community spirit is a commitment we take seriously!*

## ToughTomes

BY LAURA BILYEA, Librarian  
Central Library, Mississauga

### NEWCOMERS LIBRARY

# Welcome to Canada!

**Welcome, new immigrant,** to the red-and-white land of socialized healthcare, public education and government-funded social agencies, all waiting to help you feel at home. But where to start?

#### Have you just arrived?

Try a settlement agency—there are over 40 to choose from in the Peel Region alone. Your local library can help you find one close to where you live. Settlement agencies can help you with information on housing, personal identification cards, even learning what clothing you'll need to make it through our varied seasons.

#### Is there information to find on my own?

Absolutely. The Ontario government has a website set up for new immigrants. <http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/index.htm>

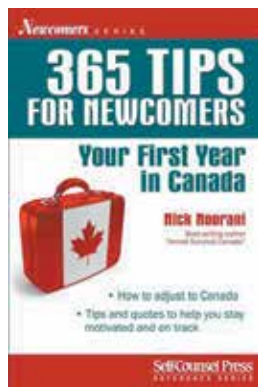
The City of Mississauga does, too. <http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/newcomers>

And there are books you can read at your local library that can help you prepare for life in Canada. We also have books and films in 25 different languages and as well as kits to help you improve your English skills. Drop in, and we'll help get you on your way!

#### 365 Tips for Newcomers : Your First Year in Canada

*Nick Noorani*

This book provides 365 tips for your first year in Canada on everything from finding a doctor, to opening a bank account, to searching for the right schools for your children, to buying real estate. A guide on how to make your first year a success that will establish you in Canada sustainably for the rest of your life.



#### You're Hired – Now What? : An Immigrant's Guide to Success in the Canadian Workplace

*Lynda Goldman*

You're Hired...Now What? will give people from different countries and backgrounds an understanding of Canadian workplace culture and norms. The material is presented as a general guide to adapting to a professional environment and explains common best-practice procedures at work. Examples are given

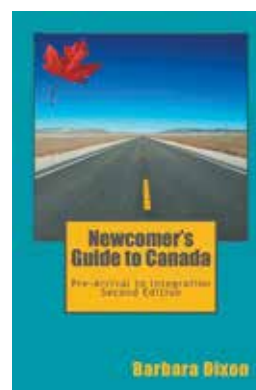


to help explain and illustrate the positive results of working within these general guidelines.

#### Newcomer's Guide to Canada: Information to Help Newcomers Before and After Arrival

*Barbara Dixon*

The Newcomer's Guide to Canada is a practical resource to help immigrants and refugees succeed in Canada and the Canadian workplace. It contains chapters on: Pre-Arrival, Coping with Culture Shock, Settlement, Finding a Job, Cultural Differences and Canadian Workplace Culture. It has Pre-Arrival, PTSD Symptoms, Rental and Settlement checklists. Worksheets on professional transferable skills, taking initiative and taking ownership are included. Sample cover letters, resumes and interview questions and answers are provided. The Newcomer's Guide is a resource for immigrants, refugees, settlement workers, HR professionals and managers.



Adults are not the only immigrants. Children need to learn more about their new country, too, and these books can help:

#### Canadian Geographic Canada for Kids: 1000 Awesome Facts

*Aaron Kylie*

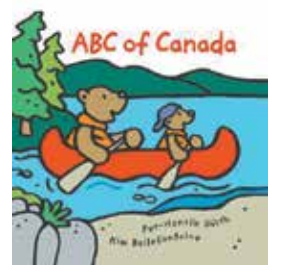
In this patriotic celebration of Canada's superlatives, complete with 300 color photographs, kids are presented with thousands of unique facts, figures and feats that make the country unique.



#### ABC of Canada

*Kim Bellefontaine*

From Arctic to Zamboni, kids can follow the alphabet on a colorful tour across Canada. On their journey, they'll visit Canadian landmarks, including Jasper National Park and Peggy's Cove. They'll also meet friendly characters enjoying Canadian pastimes, such as riding in the Calgary Stampede, playing hockey and watching the Northern Lights. Vivid illustrations and simple language guarantee that even the youngest traveler will enjoy this trip!



**See you at the library!**





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[gala@knightstable.org](mailto:gala@knightstable.org) - [www.knightstable.org](http://www.knightstable.org) - 905-454-8725



## TELLING IT LIKE IT IS

## Homelessness is solvable – with your help

BY MICHELLE BILEK

Canada has a homelessness crisis. Tonight 35,000 Canadians will sleep in shelters, on the street or in unsuitable housing. Over 235,000 people will experience homelessness at some point during the year. This has not always been the case.

**The rise of homelessness in Canada**

Homelessness on the scale we see it today has not always existed. The rise of modern mass homelessness in Canada began in the 1980s and is the direct result of federal withdrawal from affordable housing investment and cuts to social services.

In the last 20 years, as Canada's population grew over 30%, federal funding for affordable housing has dropped more than 46%. This has meant at least 100,000 units of affordable housing were not built. Today over 1.5 million Canadian households live in housing need, over 750,000 households live in extreme housing need (living in poverty

and spending over 50% of their income on housing). And the crisis may get worse as federal operating agreements for older social housing expire and over 300,000 more households may lose their housing.

**A matter of life and death for too many**

We believe all Canadians deserve safe, decent and affordable housing, but for some, the lack of housing is a matter of life and death. The longer people are homeless, the worse their health becomes. Not having a home can be lethal. Homelessness causes premature death, poor health and is a significant burden on our health-care system. A recent report from British Columbia suggests life expectancy for people experiencing homelessness in that province is half that of other British Columbians.

**Cheaper to fix than ignore**

Fixing homelessness will be much cheaper than ignoring it. Homelessness costs Canadians over \$7 billion a year.

According to the State of Homelessness in Canada: 2016, it would take an additional \$50 per Canadian per year – less than \$1 per Canadian per week – in new affordable housing investment to end homelessness.

**Homelessness is solvable**

A number of Canadian cities including Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Red Deer and Medicine Hat are showing that with a focused effort homelessness can be reduced. Hamilton, Ontario – a part of our 20,000 Homes Campaign – has reduced chronic homelessness 35% in just one year. There's every reason to believe that success like this is achievable on a national scale.

What's needed is the Government of Canada to take urgent and immediate action on housing with a focused effort on ending homelessness.

**We need your help!**

The government is currently finalizing its National Housing Strategy. Solving all of Canada's housing problems at

once, from homelessness to the rising cost of home ownership, would be wonderful. It is absolutely the right objective, but the sheer scale of the challenge requires us to prioritize.

Pick up the phone and tell your MP that you want ending homelessness to be a top priority in the new National Housing Strategy.

**Caledon**

David Tilson, 905-857-6080;

**Brampton**

Raj Grewal, 905-458-1474;  
Kamal Khera, 905-454-4758;  
Ruby Sahota, 905-840-0505;  
Ramesh Sangha, 905-790-9211;  
Sonia Sidhu, 905-846-0076;

**Mississauga**

Omar Alghabra, 905-848-8595;  
Navdeep Bains, 905-564-0228;  
Peter Fonseca, 905 566-0009;  
Iqra Khalid, 905-820-8814;  
Gagan Sikand, 905-812-1811;  
Sven Spengemann, 905-273-8033.

*Michelle Bilek is an activist in Peel Region*

JOIN THE CHANGING WATCH  
OVER PEEL POLICING

Want to know what Peel police are doing?

Check the Peel Police Services Board new and improved website at <https://www.peelpoliceboard.ca>

The Board is the seven-civilian body responsible for ensuring that Peel has effective police services, law enforcement and crime prevention, which it does by setting policies for policing, hiring the Police Chief and deputies for Mississauga and Brampton, and working with Ontario Provincial Police to provide service to Caledon.

The Board feels that the public needs to know more about policing, what policing does, how it works, and how to disagree.

First step is a redesigned website that's easy to navigate and contains essential information, from how to become a police officer (Step One: go to Peel Police website), how to make a public presentation at a Police Services Board meeting (give 10 days notice and an outline of what you want to say), to accessing reports from police on topics ranging from domestic violence to the police budget, to use of force.

Or you can track Police Services Board news items back to 2002.

Next meeting of Peel Police Services Board takes place Friday, March 24, at 9.30 a.m. in the Council Chambers at Peel Region HQ, 10 Peel Centre Drive, Brampton.

Want to know what's going on?

You can attend -- or watch it live on Rogers TV.

Feeling sad, worried about something?  
JUST DROP IN HERE FOR HELP

**A**nxiety, depression, family pressures, parenting, poverty, job loss, separation, divorce, unhealthy relationships, trauma... life's challenges can be overwhelming and it happens to everyone. But not everyone knows where to turn for help.

In 2014, 23% of Canadians aged 15 and older (6.7 million people) reported that most days were 'quite a bit' or 'extremely stressful' (Statistics Canada, 2014).

A walk-in clinic at Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin (CFSPD) is a place to get help and support.

It is open once a week in Mississauga and in Brampton, providing free counselling, no appointment needed.

Families may use three walk-in sessions for free, and after that a fee is assessed based on income. No-one is denied help if they can't pay.

Child-minding is free, so that parents can access counselling while their children play.

Walk-in counselling can also be pro-

vided in different languages, with interpreters if needed.

**Where to get help:****In Brampton:**

60 West Drive, Suite 201  
Every Thursday from 12 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

**In Mississauga:**

10 Kingsbridge Garden Circle, Suite 400  
Every Tuesday from 12:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.  
*For more information phone 905-450-1608*

Based on CFSPD's evaluation report for 2014-2015, the 1,347 surveys completed by walk-in attendees revealed:

- 70.4% of participants experienced an increase in hope
- 93.0% of people agreed that the agency served them in a manner sensitive to their culture, background or other life circumstance
- 95.2% reported that they would recommend the Counselling Service to others
- 96.5% said that the Walk-In program helped them access other needed services



# File your taxes. Get your benefits.

Filing your income taxes is an easy way to get the benefits you and your family deserve.

**And there’s help.** Make an appointment to attend a tax preparation clinic offered by the Region of Peel and the Halton Peel Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) Ontario Association. Times and dates are shown below.

**Make your appointment today.**

You can also visit the Canada Revenue Agency website at [cra-arc.gc.ca](http://cra-arc.gc.ca) to find out about other **free** tax preparation services being offered near you.



Free tax Preparation Services are for individuals with incomes up to \$30,000 or families with income up to \$40,000.

## Make an appointment to file your taxes and get your benefits

Tax preparation assistance will be offered by volunteers from the CPA of Ontario on Saturdays from March 4 to April 29 (No service provided over the Easter weekend).

We will tell you what documents you need to bring when you book your appointment.

Dates and Time	Locations	
Saturday, March 4 Saturday, March 18 Saturday, April 1 Saturday, April 29 <b>9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.</b>	<b>Region of Peel Human Services, 10 Peel Centre Dr., Suite B, Brampton</b>  Advance sign-up required in person or by calling 905-793-9200, ext. 8203 March 4, March 18, and April 1: Tax returns for 2015 and 2016 only. April 29: Tax returns for 2006 to 2014 only.	
Saturday, March 11 Saturday, March 25 Saturday, April 8 <b>9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.</b>	<b>Region of Peel Human Services 7120 Hurontario St., Mississauga</b>  Advance sign-up required in person or by calling 905-793-9200, ext. 8427 March 11 and March 25: Tax returns for 2015 and 2016 only. April 8: Tax returns for 2006 to 2014 only.	
Saturday, April 22 <b>9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.</b>	<b>Peel Youth Village 99 Acorn Place, Mississauga</b>  Advance sign-up required. Call 905-791-5576, ext. 0 April 22: Tax returns for 2015 and 2016 only.	